

MASTER'S THESIS

How can Schopenhauer's paradoxical theory of music as representation of that which cannot be represented work?

Darnley-Smith, Rachel

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Rachel Darnley-Smith

How can Schopenhauer's paradoxical theory of music as representation of that which cannot be represented work?ⁱ

Schopenhauer has been described as the 'musician's philosopher' for the detailed attention he pays to music, assigning the medium a 'pride of place in the arts' (Budd, 1985:76ⁱⁱ). Schopenhauer's aim to situate music as corresponding to the inner essence of man, that is to say the Will would seem to provide a perfect theory for the clinical discipline of music therapy whereby co-improvised music is hard to account for in words. However Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of music has received criticism in terms of its conceptual inconsistencies, (Han1997ⁱⁱⁱ) for example that it is meaningless to speak of music as a representation of that which cannot be represented. (Budd, 1985:86), that Schopenhauer has failed in his attempt to show that music can be revelatory in a meaningful way, (Alperson, 1981:155^{iv}) and furthermore that there is a problem of universality in Schopenhauer's argument with its reliance upon familiarity with the art form and an 'intuitive act of faith' (Bowie, 2003:266-8^v).

Alternatively Young (1993^{vi}) proposes that on many occasions 'Schopenhauer ignores his [Schopenhauer's] official view that music is a representation of the metaphysical "will", treating it instead as a depiction of an entirely human merely psychological reality.' (1993: 21-22).^{vii}

In this dissertation I shall revisit Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of music in the light of this criticism and examine Young's two-fold interpretation of Schopenhauer's theory of music. I shall alternatively investigate Schopenhauer's theory of the body and of music as the objectivity of the Will with reference to theoretical pre-

suppositions in clinical music therapy whereby music is understood both developmentally (Trevarthen C. and Malloch, S, 2000^{viii}) and phenomenologically (Robarts, 1988^{ix}) as originating in the body and thereby intuitively considered as essence.

Much emphasis is given in the clinical discipline of music therapy to music as non verbal expression which says what words cannot say. Expression in this context can refer either to direct expression of feeling or an isomorphic expression of self, that is the music as our performative self (Aldridge 2000:11)^x One method of music therapy within a psychoanalytic model entails freely improvising music between client and therapist, in a similar way, it could be said, (Darnley-Smith and Patey 2003:71^{xi}) to the free improvisation of words spoken between a client and psychoanalyst, technically known as free association. In the day to day practice of music therapy the problem of meaning falls within the realm of philosophical aesthetics. For example it is often said in the clinical setting that ‘the music speaks for itself’. But how can this be conceptualised in terms of what music means from within a positivist model of treatment and cure. Bowie (2003:221) in his discussion of music and language in modernity‘ contrasts the privilege given to music because it can say the unsayable, ‘that it can reveal aspects of the world that verbal language is unable to reveal’, as in Schopenhauer, with that of Hegel whose objection to music was based upon the same grounds, that it is impossible to conceptualise music, and therefore it must for ever remain in the realm of the subjective (2003:229), unable to be articulated via philosophical conceptualisation. The paradox in music as presented by Schopenhauer can be seen as arising in music therapy: That is to say, Schopenhauer’s aim to equate music with the inner essence of man, a representation of that which cannot be represented poses the following question: what is it possible to say about a

phenomenon, music, which says the unsayable or represents the unrepresentable? If a client improvises such and such music with the therapist what can be said, or to be more specific, what in a medical setting can be written, in the patient's notes?

Schopenhauer's metaphysics

The two volumes of The World as Will and Representation (WWR) published in 1818 and 1844 respectively expounds the backbone of his philosophical system. As

Janaway writes (2002:6^{xii}) 'Schopenhauer's 'true destination' is revealed in Volume 1...The dispassionate, Kantian exercise which Schopenhauer carried out in The fourfold Root of 1813 did not reveal the driving force of his philosophy. It did reveal the driving force of his philosophy. It did address questions concerning suffering and salvation, ethics and art, sexuality, death and the meaning of life'

That is to say all these questions are examined in the World as Will and Representation as integral to and resulting from his metaphysical theory.

Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory is set out in both volumes, but volume two functions more as additional thinking, the first volume contains built upon a dualist reading of the world, in part incorporating theory from Kant's philosophy, the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon, or appearance and the thing-in – itself. Schopenhauer postulates the world as at once both representation and will. However as integral to an understanding of the world he employs what could be understood as a mediating structure in his use of the Platonic Ideas. The work expands outwards from the opening Statement (WW1, p.3)

'The world is my representation' which 'if any truth can be expressed *a priori* it is this' and that the whole of the world 'is only object in relation to the subject'. That is to say, the world is not only a representation, it is always *my* representation, it always constitutes an object for a subject, there can be no object without a knowing subject, 'we find that the two are one and

the same , for every object always presupposes a subject and thus remains a representation’

(WW1:95). However representations can only signify, they are not the signified:

‘In the first book we considered the representation only as such, and hence only according to the general form...Therefore, directing our attention entirely to the representation of perception we shall endeavour to arrive at a knowledge of its content without which it would be worthless and empty. It will be of special interest for us to obtain information about its real significance, that significance , otherwise merely felt, by virtue of which these pictures or images do not march past us strange and meaningless, as they would otherwise inevitably do , but speak to us directly , are understood, and acquire an interest that engrosses our whole nature’. (WWR1:95)

Schopenhauer shows how we can never truly know things via their representation, that the explanatory disciplines of science and mathematics can never be more than ‘a record of inexplicable forces, and a reliable statement of the rule by which their phenomena appear, succeed and make way for another in time and space.’

(WWR1:98)Schopenhauer continues ‘we can never get at the inner nature of things from without. However much we may investigate, we obtain nothing but images and names.’(WWR1:99)

Schopenhauer however rejects the Kantian idea that we *cannot* know things-in-themselves, and expounds his theory of such knowledge through his theory of Will. The Will is the world considered from ‘the other side’ of representation and from this perspective, the ‘world as representation both as a whole and in its parts’ is the ‘objectivity of the will’. (WWR1:169) Will is the essence of things. It is everywhere and in everything, and is prior to our sensible experiences of things and forms of knowledge (time, space, causality).This still does not answer the question which Schopenhauer poses as a riddle:

‘What is the inner nature of things which the orderly relations among representations themselves do not reveal?’ (Janaway 1999:138)

The answer lies in the fact of our inhabitation of our own bodies. The body raises a special question within Schopenhauer's theory, as ourselves as 'knowing subjects' are not just minds, our representations are 'given entirely through the medium of a body, and the affections of this body are ...the starting point for the understanding in its perception of this world' (WWR1:99). So it follows that the body cannot just be given as representation, because we are our own particular bodies, and so uniquely the body is also given as will. For example that I move my fingers across the typewriter entails my perception of the objects in front of me, including my body. It also entails my inner understanding, my awareness that I am undertaking a certain act. 'The act of will and the action of the body are not two different states objectively known, connected by the bond of causality; they do not stand in the relation of cause and effect, but are one and the same thing, though given in two entirely different ways, first quite directly and then in perception for the understanding' (WWR1:100)

So, the answer to Schopenhauer's riddle is knowledge of the will happens through the body. As he writes, 'This and this alone gives him the key to his own phenomenon, reveals to him the significance and shows him the inner mechanism of his being, his actions, his movements...Therefore in a certain sense it can be said that the will is knowledge *a priori* of the body, and that the body is knowledge *a posteriori* of the will. (WWR1:100).

Schopenhauer's particular incorporation of Plato's theory of Ideas is the third element in his philosophy:

The Will is not just a human phenomenon. It exists prior to any form of knowledge or plurality and therefore prior to any individual being, and is 'consequently one' so is to be found objectified throughout nature. However it is not objectified uniformly and the structure of the will's objectification is theorised through the platonic ideas graded according to a natural hierarchy. At the bottom of this hierarchy are the 'most universal forms of nature' that is to say the forces which appear everywhere without exception: gravity and impenetrability. (WWR1:130) In contrast at the top of the

system is that which has the most individuality, the individual personality of man, together with the individuality of human form. (WWR1:131)

‘..Such objectification of the Will had many but definite grades, at which with increasing distinctness and completeness, the inner nature of the |will appeared in the representation, in other words presented itself as object. In these grades we recognised the Platonic Ideas once more, namely in so far as such grades are just the definite species, or the original unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies...therefore these Ideas as a whole present themselves in innumerable individuals and in isolated details, and are related to them as the archetype to its copies. The plurality of such individuals can only be conceived through time and space, their arising and passing away through causality...On the other hand the Idea does not enter into that principle ;hence neither plurality nor change belongs to it ’ (WWR1:169).

Schopenhauer utilizes Plato’s theory of Ideas as a type of bridge: The will is universal and prior to individuation whereas objects in the world exist as representations, as the will objectified. However each representation is recognised as idea. Ideas, like the will are things in themselves, but unlike the will are specific- we can recognise them as an essential stage towards individuation.

As I will show this metaphysical structure is the means with which Schopenhauer presents his understanding of music, and how in a number of ways music becomes synonymous with the will.

Schopenhauer and Music

Between 1814-1818 Schopenhauer lived in Dresden in Saxony, a city famous for its opera house and performances of Italian opera, popularly known as ‘the Florence of the north’. Here Schopenhauer wrote and published the first edition of The World as Will and Representation.^{xiii} During these years, as it would seem throughout his life, music played an integral role: he played the flute and frequently attended concerts and operas after long days isolated in his work. It may also be presumed that he attended

the opera performances by both the Italian and German Kapell-Meisterin, the double appointment being a new feature of Dresden musical life from 1817 onwards.^{xiv}

‘[He] soon became known as the person who rushed in hurriedly and usually late, often departed before the end of a performance and did not shrink from loud expressions of disapproval. Being an admirer of modernised Italian Opera, especially of Rossini, he was not greatly impressed by the efforts of the new music director, Carl Maria von Weber, who favoured German opera – to Schopenhauer’s mind merely ambitiously dressed-up musical comedy’ (Safranski, 1990:193)^{xv}

Schopenhauer’s regular exposure and critical interest in the contemporary music of his time, together with some technical knowledge as demonstrated in The World as Will and Representation. (WWRI and WWR2), possibly motivated his belief in the arts as ‘an acknowledged treasure of profound wisdom, just because the wisdom of the nature of things themselves speaks from them’ (WWR2:407) and the development of a metaphysical theory of aesthetics whereby music is considered as superior in relation to all the other arts, that its inexplicable nature corresponds to man’s essence. Schopenhauer’s commitment to music may also have motivated his quasi therapeutic stance towards the arts. Schopenhauer writes ‘that aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful consists to a large extent, in the fact that, when we enter a state of pure contemplation, we are raised for the moment above all willing, above all desires and cares; ...Such a man who, after many bitter struggles with his own nature has at last completely conquered, is left only as pure knowing being, as the undimmed mirror of the world. Nothing can distress or alarm him any more’ (WWR: 390).

For Schopenhauer ‘The aesthetic state in short is a signpost to the permanent solution to the problem of pain’ (Young, 1993:12). That is to say the apprehension or creation of art entails the suspension of a sense of self, and a letting go into the dimension of the will.

Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of music: The problem of Music as Essence

Schopenhauer's project in his theory of music was to demonstrate its indigenous relationship to the self, that is to say, the self as will. However, in so far as it would seem that music held a special curiosity for Schopenhauer, the metaphysical project also presented a special problem. Schopenhauer's theory flows from his 'explanation' which at first appears paradoxical, that music 'is a representation to that which of its essence can never be representation' and that he regards music 'as the copy of an original that can itself never be directly represented' (WWR1:257). The arts, that is to say the fine and plastic arts, excepting music, always match something in the world, and Schopenhauer presents 'that something' through his version of Plato's theory of Ideas. The arts, paintings, poetry, tragedy, architecture and so on, excepting music, are represented as Ideas. (Young, 1993:15) We understand the representations because we recognise them as Ideas. Music cannot be considered in the same general terms as the other arts since it does not match something in the world, it cannot be recognised as a repetition or copy of 'any Idea of the inner nature of the world'. That is to say music is elusive in terms of literal representational meaning, and thus it bypasses the Ideas.

Does this mean that we are unable to obtain an understanding of music therefore? No, says Schopenhauer, even though music does not represent an Idea, music seems to be simply understood by man; apparently it needs no specific explanation.

For Schopenhauer, the (Platonic) Ideas are the adequate objectification of the will, and the aim of all the other arts is to stimulate knowledge of these. Hence all the other arts objectify the will only indirectly and by means of the ideas. Music could still exist even if there were no world at all, that is to say in Schopenhauer's metaphysics music is beyond plurality, and so prior to the forms of knowledge. Music is therefore 'as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself is...the objectivity of

which are the ideas.’ For this reason, Schopenhauer thinks ‘the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than the other arts’ (WWR1:257) It might be supposed that Schopenhauer presents Leibniz’s definition of music to contrast with his theory so far. Leibniz defined music, ‘An unconscious exercise in arithmetic in which the mind does not know it is counting’^{xvi} implying an understanding of music based upon the mathematical structures of harmony and rhythm.

Han (1997:43^{xvii}) writes of this rationalist position, ‘In his famous definition of music. Leibniz privileges the rational and mathematical structure of harmony over the emotional impact of melody...More precisely, he asserts that musical pleasure derives from a sort of isomorphism tying together musical harmony on the one hand, and on the other hand, the mathematical order which regulates nature as a whole’.

But Schopenhauer is not satisfied with this, as it reduces the effect of music solely to a description of its form, whilst omitting content, or in this case omitting the idea of music as essence.

‘.it [music] is such an exceedingly fine art, its effect on man’s innermost nature is so powerful and it is so completely and profoundly understood by him in his innermost being as an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the world of perception itself, that in it we need to look for more than that ‘exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi’ which Leibniz took it to be.’

Schopenhauer presents this contrast of definition as a tension, which can be seen as derived from his theory of knowledge that ‘we can never get at the inner nature of things from without’ (WWR: 99). We can determine the structures of music but more work is needed to arrive at an explanation of essence, that is to say, form can never be reduced to the meaning of content.

For Schopenhauer the satisfaction of music could not be compared to the satisfaction of an outcome of a sum in arithmetic: ‘we must attribute to music a far more serious and profound significance that refers to the innermost being of the world and of our own self. In this regard the numerical ratios into which it can be resolved are related not as the thing signified, but only as the sign’. (WWR:256)

Schopenhauer argues that music must *be* more than its outward forms because music has a certain effect upon us internally. That is to say we have a private subjective response to it. From this Schopenhauer infers that ‘in some sense music must be related to the world as the depiction to the thing depicted.’ (WWR1:256) Furthermore since music is imitative [to the will] in its reference and since it is understood by everyone, music must be very profound, infinitely true and really striking. But, Schopenhauer clarifies he is not arguing that essence is all that music is, as ‘its forms can be reduced to quite definite rules expressible in numbers from which it cannot possibly depart without entirely ceasing to be music’. (WWR1:256). On the other hand Schopenhauer concedes that this link is not only very obscure, and indeed that he cannot demonstrate it. But that it is possible for men to ‘practice’ music ‘without being able to give an account of this...content to understand it immediately, they renounce any abstract conception of this direct understanding itself’. WWR1:256 So whilst it is possible to demonstrate the exterior of music through describing its forms as representation, this is not enough, as Schopenhauer’s metaphysical dualism of Will and Representation, together with our interior experience of music suggests. This is the basis for Schopenhauer’s metaphysical theory of music: Like Schopenhauer’s theory of Will and Representation, it is dualist in structure: Music comes as form but ‘experience’ demonstrates is more than form, it has essence. Form and essence in music is reduced to ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ respectively.

Schopenhauer sets out to demonstrate that the essence of music is not reducible to its form. It is through form that music ‘passes through the *principium individuationis*’

and is apprehended as objectified Will. His explanation ‘assumes and establishes a relation of music as a representation to that which of its essence can never be a representation, and claims to regard music as a copy of an original that can itself never be directly represented.’ (WWR1:257). That is why it is impossible to demonstrate. The essence of music can never be objectified, that is to say represented, and music is a non representational art form. Instead Schopenhauer advises the reader to test out his ideas for themselves, ‘that in order that a man may assent with genuine conviction to the explanation of the significance of music here to be given, that he should often listen to music with constant reflection on this’.(WWR1:257).

What is the relation between music, the ideas and the will? Schopenhauer’s analogies

Having made a case for music as by passing the Will, Schopenhauer presents a series of analogical arguments, firstly to make a case for the special relationship between music and the Ideas. He does this on the basis that the ideas and music are both objectifications of the same will, although in a different way, so Schopenhauer claims, there is not ‘an absolutely direct likeness, but yet a parallel, an analogy...’ (WWR1:258). He claims that the deepest tones of musical harmony are like the lowest grades of the Will’s objectification, that is to say the mass of the planet. This is because ‘all the high notes, light tremulous and dying away more rapidly , may be regarded as resulting from the simultaneous vibrations of the deep bass note.’ (WWR1:258). So it follows from this that, the Ideas are the Will’s objectification in all its grades. Music is like the Ideas as it is an objectification of the same Will, sharing the same structure. If Schopenhauer’s metaphysical system is to be accepted, the Ideas and music share the same relation to the world.

The analogy is now extended further, and suggests the theory of plurality,

Schopenhauer writes that

‘No matter is perceivable without form and quality, in other words, without the manifestation of a force incapable of further explanation, in which an Idea expresses itself, and more generally, no matter can be without Will.’ (WWR1:258).

This is congruent with the fact that there is a limit to the depth of pitch at which a tone is audible, and ‘so a certain grade of the Will’s manifestations is inseparable from matter.’ (WWR: 258). Schopenhauer is seeking to demonstrate here how his metaphysical theory of music matches the world. Musical tones can be sounded, but at the lowest and highest pitches cannot be heard by the human ear. He uses this knowledge to show in parallel therefore that music exists prior to forms of knowledge, in this case, sense perception. Our perception of musical tones can be seen as having the same structure as the relationship between the Ideas and the Will, with the essence, the known unknown.

Schopenhauer then uses both these analogies, of harmonics and the plurality of forms of knowledge, as a basis from which to present further more specifically musical analogies, and it is here that Schopenhauer begins to utilize some technical knowledge of the ‘rules’ for musical harmony common in German music at this time as a basis for his argument. He presents the grades of the will as objectified in ideas as being like the relativity of pitch: ‘Those nearer to the bass are lower of those grades, namely the still inorganic bodies manifesting themselves. Those that are higher represent to me the plant and animal worlds’

Schopenhauer develops this idea by stating that the intervals of musical scale are parallel to the *definite* grades of the will’s objectification for example, such as the form of ‘definite species in nature.’ (WWR1:258, my italics.). He further claims on the same basis therefore that ‘The departure from arithmetical correctness of the intervals through

some temperament, or produced by the selected key, is analogous to the departure of the individual from the type of species...in fact, the impure discords, giving no definite interval, can be compared to the monstrous abortions between two species of animals, or between man and animal'. (WWR259)

Schopenhauer also applies this same analogy to all the musical voices in a piece of music, the bass, and what he terms as the *ripieno*, which is usually a technical term denoting the non solo parts of the orchestra in a concerto for example^{xviii}. In this case however it is as though Schopenhauer actually means all the parts, such as the inner harmonies, in addition to the bass, which in his opinion are non-melodic, those parts which are 'without melodious connection and significant progress...are analogous to the fact that in the whole irrational world, from the crystal to the most perfect animal, no being has a really connected consciousness that would make its life into a significant whole.' (WWR1:259).

Finally, Schopenhauer presents a series of analogies between the will and melody, the latter being analogous to highest grades of the will's objectification.

'.....in the *melody*, in the high, singing principal voice, leading the whole and progressing with unrestrained freedom, in the uninterrupted significant connection of *one* thought from beginning to end , and expressing a whole, I recognize the highest grade of the will's objectification, the intellectual life and endeavour of man.'

Schopenhauer argues that it is in the nature of man that his will constantly strives oscillating between desire and satisfaction. He says that this corresponds to the 'nature of melody... [As] a constant digression and deviation from the keynote in a thousand ways, not only to harmonious intervals, the third and dominant but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to the extreme intervals; yet there always follows a final return to the keynote.' (WWR1:260)

By illustration of this one could take any simple folk tune or Christmas carol and hear how the melody begins and ends in the same tonal place having 'travelled'.

For example the Irish Air, Down by the Sally Gardens repeats the same musical

phrase twice before deviating and then finishing with the original musical phrase.

Inherent in the music is a sense of statement, development and return. The feasibility of generalising from Schopenhauer's analogies to the will, in that his musical examples are quite specific, will be explored in more depth below.

Schopenhauer now describes music in terms of emotion, equating emotion with what the composer 'reveals', that is to say 'the innermost nature of the world'. He gives instance of musical expression, in citing particular musical directions, for example the '*adagio* in the minor key reaches the expression of the keenest pain, and becomes the most convulsive lament' (WWR1:261).

However, in possibly the most important distinction in Schopenhauer's theory of music, he explains how this does not mean that it is literally the music itself that expresses the feeling, that is to say the phenomenon. Rather the music expresses the

'inner nature, the in-itself, of every phenomenon, the will itself'. Therefore music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction joy, pain...but joy, pain, themselves, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories and so also without the motives for them. (WWR1:261)

Schopenhauer argues that this is why composers have set words to music, since the music seems to be able to relate so easily to what the composer wants to convey.

Again, this does not mean that music should be made to fit with what the words say, for example, this is the problem with some opera, and other music which sets out to convey a non-musical picture or idea,

‘...if music tries to stick too closely to the words, and to mould itself according to the events, it is endeavouring to speak a language not its own’ (WWR1:262).

Rather, music and words exist in two different realms, it is like the example Schopenhauer gives of the man who ‘gives himself up entirely to the impression of a symphony, it is as if he saw all the possible events of life and of the world passing by within himself. Yet if he reflects he cannot assert any likeness between that piece of music and the things that have passed through his mind.’

From this point Schopenhauer formulates the idea of the universality of music, as a thing in itself, analogous to the universality of concepts, but not in an abstract way.

Rather, like ‘the geometrical figures and numbers which are the universal forms of all possible objects of experience and are *a priori* applicable to them all and yet are not abstract, but perceptible and thoroughly definite...we could just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will; this is the reason why music makes every picture appear in enhanced significance and this is, of course all the greater more analogous its melody is to the inner spirit of the given phenomenon’ (WWR1:262)

More about Music Therapy

As Budd (1985:76) implies, Schopenhauer’s theory of music has been notoriously influential, and despite the conceptual problems commentators find inherent, it seems as though musicians are able to relate to what he has to say. As stated above Music Therapists face the problem of problem of musical meaning anything each day of their working lives. They experience long silences from their patients if they try to encourage some reflective discussion about the music that has been improvised, not just people might be depressed or have cognitive difficulties with speech. As mentioned above they find it hard account for clinical sessions in terms of the music which was made, describing the type of music or simply what happen does not reduce into what the music in the session meant. In this section I want to briefly go into a

little more detail to show how in a practical way Schopenhauer's theory can be related to a particular approach to music therapy which initially focussed upon work with children.

The following paragraph opened an influential text book of music therapy which during the 1970's heralded a way of thinking about the use of music and health:

'The concept of the music child presented itself as the means of summing up the depth, the intensity, the variety and the intelligence in the responses of some hundreds of handicapped children in musical interactivity.....This concept is not limited to the child with special musical gifts but focuses attention on that entity in every child which responds to musical experience...The music child is therefore the individualised musicality born in each child: the term has reference to the universality of musical sensitivity – the heritage of complex sensitivity to the ordering of tonal and rhythmic movement; it also points to the distinctly personal significance of each child's musical responsiveness.' (Nordoff and Robbins, 1977:1^{xix})

The significance of the idea of the 'music child' lies in its essentialist quality which defies the equating of music with special talent. Musicality resides inside all of us, it categorically states. The music child concept, developed as an explanation for the musical responses these two pioneering clinicians experienced from children who were in some way or other profoundly disabled physically, emotionally or intellectually, and the idea of music as will. The children Nordoff and Robbins worked with did not need to be taught how to play music, or how to respond to music; with the support of the therapists who were developing special ways of improvising and song writing for therapeutic purposes, music simply happened. Whilst they might write special words for songs or improvisations, it was the music itself that was of chief importance. Whilst they assiduously devised methods of assessment for the therapy which measured non-musical goals, it is noticeable that they were reluctant to create specific ways of building meaning into the musical material, a way of understanding what it meant. There are links to be made between Schopenhauer's

idea of music as will and the music child and Schopenhauer's theory of music as universal principle existing prior to the forms of knowledge, the innermost kernel.

According to Schopenhauer because music is the will we understand it perfectly

‘ Hence it arises that our imagination is so easily stirred by music , and tries to shape that invisible , yet vividly aroused, spirit world that speaks to us directly ’ (WWR1:261)

Nordoff and Robbins's method was based upon the idea of evoking the music or music child from within, as opposed to the idea that music needed to be introduced to the child, the child already recognised the medium and knew what it was for.

They write

For the child who is intellectually impaired, music and musical activities can be vivid intelligible experiences that require no abstract thought...in attempting to depict the central motivating power of music therapy – a child's commitment to his musical activity.

Like Schopenhauer they were dissatisfied with the relationship between music and words, that music somehow surpasses conceptual meaning:

we have become all too aware of the limitations of words to describe musical experience. Only music itself can convey the meaning of its experience, and much more is involved in this than auditory stimuli, rhythm, the “tune” associations, and so on.’ (Nordoff and Robbins, 1973^{xx})

In application it can be seen that there are a number of important correspondences between Schopenhauer's theory and the music therapy method of free music making, that a Schopenhaurian explanation of music at some level makes sense.

I shall now turn to a discussion of some of the conceptual difficulties with Schopenhauer's theory of music.

Discussion

Commentators cite a number of conceptual problems with Schopenhauer, three of which I shall focus upon. Firstly that of the inconstancies in Schopenhauer's thinking. Secondly I shall introduce Julian Young's particular reading of Schopenhauer which

allows for a more flexible reading of his musical theory. I shall then focus upon two problems which seem to be retained by his theory, whether the musical analogies are convincing and the problem of music being conceptualised prior to time.

The main thrust of Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of music is that music is a representation of that which cannot be represented. The outward form of music cannot tell us what its inner meaning is, although without such form we will not have music at all. Schopenhauer explains this to his reader with regard to the difficulty of making inferences about the will. He writes '...the word *will*, which, like a magic word, is to reveal to us the innermost essence of everything in nature, by no means expresses an unknown quantity, something reached by inferences and syllogisms, but something known absolutely and immediately, and that so well that we know and understand what will is better than anything else, be it what it may.'

(*WWRI:111*) Schopenhauer makes a similar point with reference to his musical theory 'in order that a man may assent with genuine conviction to the explanation of the significance of music here to be given, that he should often listen to music with constant reflection on this [that is to say, the theory of music] (*WWRI:257*). These sections demonstrate further to the exposition above, the difficulty Schopenhauer acknowledges in conceptualising a theory of music within a metaphysical structure where music exists prior to concepts. Even so, there are a number of conceptual problems which have arisen cited with differing emphases by a number of commentators.

Han (1997:48) points out the 'seemingly insoluble difficulties of Schopenhauer's claims.' She notes that 'section 52 of the World as Will and Representation [*WWRI:255-267*] presents us with no less than five definitions of music: Music is successively characterised as the "re-production" the objectification, the "objectivity", and finally the "incarnation" of the will before being completely identified with the latter'.

Alperson (1981) argues in what we might term a 'no win' situation that Schopenhauer fails in his main aim –to show that musical experience provides us with a unique kind

of revelation ' (1981:155). He argues that if Schopenhauer shows that 'what is revealed by music is not expressible as specific ideas in a body of propositions (or by some other means), then one cannot say (or otherwise specify what has been revealed,) so the claim to revelation is empty. If, on the other hand, what is revealed by music is otherwise expressible as specific ideas in a body of propositions (or by some other means), then it is hard to see why...music should be valued for its revelatory function: music would not be remarkable in this regard.' (1981:160). Budd makes a similar critique: to describe music as a representation of that which cannot be represented simply does not make sense. His (Schopenhauer's) explanation is problematic because if the term 'representation' is taken seriously the explanation does not make sense. What cannot be represented cannot be represented –even by music' (Budd, 1994:86-7). None of these commentators however, completely dismiss Schopenhauer. For Budd the initial answer to the problem is to understand the thesis that music is a representation of the will in a non-literal way. '–the sense, [writes Budd] that Schopenhauer had in mind- can be discovered by a consideration of what [he] says about the relation between music and the Ideas' (1994:86-7). It can be seen that Schopenhauer has relied heavily upon analogy as his means of showing the relationship between music, the ideas and the will. Budd on the other hand finds each parallel to 'be fanciful' bearing 'no significant relation to the experience of music'. This is, according to Budd (1985:96) with the exception of Schopenhauer's analogy between melody and Will. He writes, 'We must reject all the parallels Schopenhauer draws between aspects of music and alleged manifestations of the will except those which relate to phenomena in which there is pain and pleasure and genuine striving for a goal' but that if we accept his conception of music as understood in this 'diminished form it asserts a likeness between music and conscious goal-directed

activity...’. It could be argued though that whilst there are certainly problems with Schopenhauer’s musical analogies, particularly where he makes comparisons between aspects of the will and music, Schopenhauer seems to be writing from the point of view of opinion rather than aesthetic theory. His ‘monstrous abortions’ analogy with ‘the departure from arithmetical correctness’, (WWR1:258-9) which Budd dismisses, is quite possibly Schopenhauer giving vent to opinion within a contemporary debate about the modern tuning of instruments in equal temperament.

Young (1993:5-24) develops Budd’s strategy in his suggestion of a solution to the conceptual problems in Schopenhauer’s musical metaphysics which allows for a more than one reading and therefore more flexibility of interpretation. I shall look at the problem of the analogies seeking a means to solve the problem of their personal specificity.

Young invites us to ‘notice that Schopenhauer’s account of the absoluteness of music has two aspects to it:

- on the one hand music is said to be about *metaphysical* reality, the thing in itself;
- On the other hand it is said to be about *psychological* reality, about “will”.

Young suggests that this double ‘aspectedness’ is responsible for ambivalence in Schopenhauer’s theory that comes to a head in the case of opera. If we focus upon the metaphysical reality, the thing in itself, the status of opera, becomes highly problematic in that it is structured through narrative, action and visual image, so implicitly representational,

‘If music gives us direct access to the thing in itself...If the highest form of art is that with the greatest cognitive value, then it would seem to follow that the highest form of

music is purely instrumental..and if we further assume, as Schopenhauer tends to, that music has only one proper function, opera comes to appear as a debased form of art (1993:21).

But, Young points out, this does not seem to fit with what Schopenhauer writes about opera, ‘his writings are full of glowing references to the individual operas of Mozart, Rossini and...Bellini...’(1993:22)He suggests that

‘...Schopenhauer ignores his official view that music is a representation of the *metaphysical* “will”, treating it instead as a depiction of an entirely human merely *psychological* reality.

Developed in this way, Schopenhauer’s theory of musical representation posits, as its object, human emotions. Not however “particular and definite” emotions but, rather their “inner nature” divorced from all accessories and so also without any motives for them (WWR1:261, cited Young)...he treats the way in which music depicts , as we might call it, the feeling of feeling as a matter of isomorphic correspondence between , on the one hand, elements of the represented emotion and on the other, elements (mainly rhythmic and melodic) in the music...Understood in the above non-metaphysical way as a precursor to [Susanne] Langer, Schopenhauer’s theory of musical representation becomes highly “opera friendly” , for on it opera becomes not only highly legitimate but might even be regarded as (speaking from Schopenhauer’s cognitivist point of view) the highest art form. For if music depicts the inner reality of human life and words the outer, then music and words appear to be ideally suited to combine in the presentation of a stereoscopic vision of the world.’ (1993:23)

In diagram 1.it is possible to see Young’s contrasting of a metaphysical reading with a psychological reading of Schopenhauer, together with the problems which are retained.

Even if we accept that Young has provided a more flexible reading of Schopenhauer’s theory, it is evident that the musical examples provided in the text may be too specific to western art music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or in places too specific to particular pieces. For example not all bass lines in music of this time,

perform the harmonic function Schopenhauer relies upon for his analogy with the 'ground bass' and the 'lowest grades of the will' .

It would seem legitimate therefore to question the basis for the analogical structure of Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of music on the grounds that it is only possible to understand and indeed accept the argument through reference to European art music of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries. This does not seem too serious a problem in itself. At worst, from a twenty-first century view where technology provides instant access with little human effort to any kind of music we could conceive of, Schopenhauer's perspective seems rather parochial. But it begs a question of whether the theory could only apply to the specific type of music he is writing about, if Schopenhauer is formulating music as the Will, does he mean any music or specifically the music to which he refers? Bowie (2003:267) makes the point that 'Schopenhauer writes wholly within the specific Western musical tradition which develops with Viennese classicism: the resolution of tension within sonata form is the best example of the sort of music he is referring to'. Is it possible to find such a specific stylistic device in any other kind of music, would such music still be an indicator of the will?

It is relevant to compare this view with an empirical perspective from academic music psychology. For example Schopenhauer's analogy between the will and melody begs the question whether the concept of a melody is unique to the context within which Schopenhauer is writing. One way to approach this is via reference to harmony and scale patterns in music upon which the construction of a melody is based. Sloboda (1985:253^{xxi}) poses the question whether 'there are some underlying features which typify most music' and one such area is the 'use of pitch dimension in different

cultures'. If there is, he argues, 'these might be related to some universal cognitive basis for music which transcended individual cultures'

He writes 'A very large number of cultures contain both in theory and practice the notion that music takes place with respect to certain fixed *reference* pitches. These pitches need not be fixed for all time, but are usually fixed for the duration of a single piece of music. In many cultures the principle reference pitch (or pitches) are maintained throughout the music in the form of a (usually instrumental) 'drone'. Even where drones are absent, we can usually see that certain pitches are privileged in that music often returns to them, and circles around them...thus although tonality as we know it is by no means universal, the notions of scale and tonic have formal analogies in most cultures. (1985:253).

Sloboda continues by referring to a universal phenomenon of subdivision within scales which commonly possess an unequal interval. He cites Shepherd (1982^{xxii}) who argues that it is this property of uneven spacing which 'enables the listener to have, at every moment, a clear sense of where the music is with respect to such a framework. Only with respect to such a framework can there be things such as motion or rest, tension and resolution, or in short, the underlying dynamisms of tonal music....'(Sloboda, 1985:255).

This empirical research can provide some confidence that whilst Schopenhauer was writing from within a particular musical context, with regard to his analogies between particular stylistic features of music and the will, it is possible to consider his theory in more general terms. Whilst his analogy between the grades of the will and the harmony (WWR1:259) seems at first to be predicated upon a very limited conception of a bass line, in the broader context given to us by Sloboda, it is possible to read Schopenhauer as stating something more fundamental about music. Here it is possible to substitute the analogy between the bass harmony and the lowest grades of the will,

for the ‘drone’. Indeed the drone is often associated with long held notes which maintain the harmony. An example of this would be the Bagpipes, a well known instrument in Europe which incorporates one or more drone pipes which sound unaltered harmony notes. It is also possible from this same perspective to concede Schopenhauer’s idea of melody as corresponding to the will, ‘the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the keynote in a thousand ways...’ (WWR1:260).

However there is a deeper question to consider and that is Schopenhauer’s theory that music as a ‘universal language’ is prior to concepts, and therefore to philosophizing. :

As music is the phenomenon to the in-itself, ‘this is why ‘music makes every picture, indeed every scene from real life, and from the world, at once appear in enhanced significance...it is due to this that we are able to set a poem to music as a song....For to a certain extent melodies are like universal concepts an abstraction from reality’.

Both melodies and concepts are similar because they ‘furnish what is perceptive, special and individual, the particular case, both to the universality of the concepts and to that of the melodies’. However as universalities, concepts contain forms which have first of all been abstracted from perception, whereas music ‘gives the innermost kernel preceding all form or the heart of things. ‘Schopenhauer suggests that their relation could be expressed ‘in the language of scholastics’, that ‘the concepts are the *universalia post rem*, but music gives the *universalia ante rem*, and in reality the *universalia in re*.’ (WWR1:263)

Han (1997) notes a conceptual problem here with Schopenhauer’s theory on the grounds that it is hard conceptualise music, (which is a supremely temporal medium) as prior to the forms of knowledge. She cites the view from Jankélévitch

(1983^{xxiii}) that ‘it is hard to see how sonorous impressions can escape from the form of time and thus from the principle of sufficient reason itself.’ Schopenhauer makes a fleeting reference to the question of time with regard to music, emphasising (his opinion of) a sort of ‘perfect music’ in which the will can be objectified. He then continues ‘Thus the one will outside time finds its complete objectification only in the complete union of all the grades that reveal its inner nature in the innumerable degrees of enhanced distinctness’ (WWR1:265)

Possibly Schopenhauer realised the problem he was creating, ‘I might still have much to add on the way in which music is perceived, namely in and through time alone with absolute exclusion of space, even without the influence of the knowledge of causality, and thus of the understanding’ (WWR1:266). But he does not address music’s status as essence in relation to time. Han continues ‘This raises another difficulty, since such an escape is called for by Schopenhauer’s claim that music is the immediate objectification of the will,’ (Jankélévitch, 1983:26-27,). Moreover, if music must submit itself to the most general form of representation its ‘privileged access to the noumenal essence of the world will disappear along with its ontological primacy over the other arts’ (1997:49).

A psychological reading of Schopenhauer’s theory of music might allow for some examination of a developmental view of music, which in turn might accommodate a conception of time with regards to music. That is to say, our experience of the body is an experience of living in time. As Han (1997) points out, Schopenhauer’s metaphysical treatment of music as will does not allow for music to take place in time; in these terms it is theorised purely as prior to individuation, as a universal and therefore prior to time as a form of knowledge. If the body is given as will in time, then could it be possible to conceive of music as objectified will also as occurring in time?

I want to suggest that as we apprehend the will through our bodies, we also apprehend music, not in the formalised way that Schopenhauer has described, but

music in its elemental form, that is to say rhythm, pitch, timbre and duration, prior to its becoming an 'artwork'

However as described above, the will as object is given through the body, not as a whole will, but an individual will, and so, 'I know my will ...only in individual acts and hence in time which is the form of my body's appearing, as it is of every body'. (WWR1:101-2). Schopenhauer, as described above, gives the body high status with regard to our apprehension of the will. He writes how the body and the affections of the will are the starting point for our understanding of the world. The action of the body is nothing but the act of will objectified, that is to say translated into perception. Every true, genuine and immediate act of will is also at once and directly a manifest act of the body. The knowledge I have of my will, although an immediate knowledge cannot be separated from my body. (WWR1:99-101)

If as knowing subject the will is given to me through my body, I apprehend the will objectified in time, as I apprehend my individual body likewise. But my body is not a static being, through my intentional acts as a body I experience will. It could also be said that through acting I am acting musical elements.

Robarts (1998) writes of how music can be conceptualised as implicitly part of our bodies

'The impulses of walking, breathing, heartbeat, autonomic processes, and indeed all kinaesthetic or motion sensing aspects of expression through movement, with the tonal inflections of our voices (whether in laughing, crying, or speaking) form a musical hierarchy or orchestration of self regulation and self-organisation, all directly linked to feeling states, and to their emotive transmission towards others.' (1998, p.176^{xxiv})

For Robarts musical elements are here inextricably indigenous to the intentional acts of the body. This is together with (as per Young's psychological reading of Schopenhauer) 'feeling states' posited as objects. However Schopenhauer has constructed a theory of music in which it is not the music itself which creates individual feeling, indeed this would be not to recognise it as will, but our recognition of it as an expression of a generalised feeling in itself.. Robart's constructivist perspective of music as a music therapist begins with the body and implies that it is here that music originates. It is as though, for Schopenhauer, on the one hand music occurs independently of man, that it is 'found' not made, but gives us access to our inner nature. On the other hand music is given to us as a universal, as will. If we accept Young's reading of Schopenhauer's theory where music depicts a 'psychological reality', then it might be possible to consider a theory of the origin of music which entails music as an innate phenomena which starts in the body, that is to say with the human voice. Psychobiologists Trevarthen and Malloch (2000:4^{xxv}) write

'Research on how infants attend to and stimulate intuitive music in parent's vocal play, and how they can imitate and reciprocate intricately co-ordinated expressions, strongly suggest that we are born like this and that the infant's sympathy arises from an inborn rhythmic coherence of body movement and modulation of affective expressions. A paediatric neurologist can be trained to judge the health or distress of a premature new born infant's brain choreographically, by evaluating the shape and timing, the rhythms and grace or non coordination of the spontaneous movements of the baby's limbs. We believe that underlying acquired musical motor skills and perception of cultivated music forms is an intrinsic "musicality", and this is an aspect of motivation and emotion that has power to communicate.'

It would seem from this empirical research that the elements of music can be seen to be apprehended from the earliest moments of life and that the body and music can be conceptualised as indigenous to one another, and that this is an innate state of affairs. From this empirical information I have tried to show how it might be possible to

conceptualise the will as objectified in and through the body, and suggest how the will might also be objectified through ‘the music of the body’. This can only happen in Schopenhauer’s terms because the will is given in the body through time, and therefore we can conceptualise music as objectified will as a developmental process.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have presented Schopenhauer’s theory of music, and discussed some of the conceptual inconsistencies. I have also briefly discussed the same theory in the context of a music therapy setting where the problem of musical meaning is indigenous to the work, and where Schopenhauer’s theory applied seems both explanatory and to be already intuitively incorporated into the theoretical approach. I have tried therefore to show how whilst conceptually Schopenhauer suffers from criticism his ideas seem to make sense in musical situ. This may not be surprising given that his theory is of a music that exists prior to conceptualisation. In order to arrive at some conclusion as to how music can be understood intuitively as essence have finished by experimenting with the idea that whilst in empirical developmental theory music is indigenous to self and bodily expression, Schopenhauer’s theory of music might be best understood through relating it to another non-verbal representation, also will objectified, the body.

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ⁱⁱ Budd, M. (1985) *'Music and the Emotions: The Philosophical Theories'*. London: Routledge.

ⁱⁱⁱ Han B. (1997) 'Beyond Metaphysics and Subjectivity', *Epoche* 5, 1&2: 44-69

^{iv} Alpers, P. (1981) 'Schopenhauer and Musical Revelation'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40 (2) 155-166.

^v Bowie, A. (2003, 2nd Edition) *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

^{vi} Young, J. (1993) *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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^{xii} Janaway, C. (2002) *Schopenhauer A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.6.

^{xiii} Janaway, C. (2002) *ibid*.

^{xiv} Sadie, S. (ed.) (2002, 2nd edition) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. 7, p. 575.

^{xv} Safranski, R. (1990) *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy*. (Trans) E. Osers. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

^{xvi} Translation from footnote in Schopenhauer's text by E.J.F. Payne

^{xvii} Han B. (1997) *ibid*

^{xviii} Schopenhauer uses the term *ripeno* in an unusual way, whilst it normally refers to the orchestra in contrast to a soloist, it seems as though he means something more akin to the inner parts of the orchestra, alto and tenors opposed to the treble and bass. However this section is weakened by the lack of clarity.

^{xix} Nordoff, P. and Robbins, C. *Creative Music Therapy*. New York: John Day Company

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^{xxiii} Jankélévitch, V. (1983) *La Music et l'ineffable*. Paris. Cited in Han (1997).

^{xxiv} Roberts, J. Z. (1998) 'Music Therapy and Children with Autism.' In Trevarthen, C., Aitken, K., Papoudi, D., Roberts, J. Z. *Children With Autism: Diagnosis and Interventions to Meet Their Needs*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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^{xxv} Trevarthen C. and Malloch, S. (2000) 'The Dance of Wellbeing: Defining the Musical Therapeutic Effect'. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 9 (2) 3-17.

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Schopenhauer, A. *The World as Will and Representation*. Volumes I and II. Translated by E.F.J. Payne (1969). New York: Dover Publications (cited in text as WWR1 and 2)